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Faculty Development Strategies: Practical Problems of EFL Teachers in India**Dr. K. Jaisingh***Ad hoc faculty, Dept. of Humanities and Social Sciences, National Institute of Technology, Warangal, (A.P.) India***Prof. D.S. Kesava Rao***Head, Dept. of Humanities and Social Sciences, National Institute of Technology, Warangal, (A.P.) India***Abstract**

The complex nature of the Indian classroom requires several faculty development techniques regularly. Latest technologies like Internet and Mobile phones have only added another dimension to this issue. This paper explores the important role played by Faculty Development Programme conducted by the English and Foreign Language University. All the FDPs should have two main objectives keeping in mind the practical problems of ESL teachers in India. One is to obtain a clear perspective of such programs not only on the teachers' real development but also the way an English teacher interacts with her other colleagues. The second is to make the teachers motivate to take initiatives to gain an insight into the process by which they can develop their own small communities and interact regularly. Blogs and other such latest technologies innovations should stimulate the teacher. The crucial role of teacher mentors is emphasized. Finally the article recommends that after regular interaction among all the stakeholders, the feedback taken from teachers should be strictly implemented for an effective teaching-learning process.

Key Words: Faculty Development, Internet and Blogs, stakeholders, practical problems, teaching-learning process, feedback

"All growth depends upon activity. There is no development physically or intellectually without effort, and effort means work." - Calvin Coolidge

The English Teachers in India are in a peculiar position. They have to not only deal with a complex class room with a strength of around 60 students but also with the applicability of the latest methods like Communicative Language Teaching, Natural Approach etc. On the one hand there are many traditionalists who believe that Grammar Translation Method is still the best. There are many others who insist on the combination of Direct Method and the Audio-Lingual Method.

Communicative Language Teaching has become fashionable all over the world from the 1980s onwards. Even the Indian government in its 1986 report on education and another report in the 1990s strongly

recommended the implementation of Communicative Language Teaching.

So what should the English Teacher in India do? She must of course follow a combination of the Grammar Translation Method, Audio-Lingual Method and the latest trends with special preference given to Communicative Language Teaching. But practical results have shown that CLT is successful only in very elite schools / colleges but in other areas it has mixed results. In some rural areas and classrooms where students have a lot of freedom or large classrooms, it is a complete disaster. In fact for many new or inexperienced teachers the Communicative Language Teaching experience is a

frustrating and irritating experience. The role of Faculty Development Programme plays an active and important role in such a scenario. A Faculty Development Program can address most factors of concern, provide training and support, and measure impact of training. A good Faculty Development Programme should be in the format of the workshop covering the analysis of course content, conceptions of learning, the selection of appropriate teaching strategies, the evaluation of student learning, and evaluation of teaching in a way that reflects the spontaneity of the debates it has engendered and the workshop's evolutionary change. (Alenoush Saroyan, Cheryl Amundsen, 2004).

The Teacher is Also a Student Once:

The teachers should first be made aware of the fact that the teachers should be comfortable in the presence of a group of students and try to develop and influence that group. Methods are secondary. They are complementary in the sense that, methods help teachers in bringing to conscious awareness the thinking that underlies their actions. Training the trainer and motivating the motivator is the main motto of the Faculty Development Programmes and orientation programmes. Teachers were also students once and so a major purpose of such programmes is to make this fact explicit and come into the active consciousness of the teachers. There is no such thing as the best method (Prabhu, 1990).

So the teachers should not blindly follow the latest trends but should follow their natural instincts and act accordingly. In this way they will be very clear on how they should teach. As learners the teachers

in her younger days must have had some expectations on how a teacher should teach. The teacher thus has in their past experiences must have subconsciously formed certain opinions about the teaching process itself. The job of a teacher trainer is to make this sub-conscious notion regarding the teaching, more active, more reflective and more implementational in her classroom and also in her thinking process especially with the omni-presence of latest technology like Internet, mobiles etc. Organizers of FDPs should have a clear perception regarding:

“What kind of pedagogical theory might underlie the process of learning about teaching for academics? Unless those who provide such courses can begin to answer this question, it is difficult to see how they are likely to achieve the envisaged development of English Language Teaching.” (Stephen Rowland, University of Sheffield, 1999)

Another important aspect is to make the teacher confident to actively assert herself when dealing with the higher authorities. Dealing with the management is a highly sensitive issue and so the teacher must be very careful in both their ideas and the approach.

Another important aspect which can be very helpful for the teachers is to make them conscious that they are part of the teaching community and share many common problems, benefits, experiences etc. Many teachers think individually and miss out on many great learning techniques. Faculty Development Programmes help the teachers a lot in this issue. They must understand that in their

professional discourse they possess an identity of their own. An English teacher must actively interact with other English teachers. Unfortunately due to various reasons this does not happen as regularly as it should be. An occasional seminar in a year does not really help.

Importance of Internet:

This is the age of Internet and instant communication and therefore such programmes must be conducted at least once a month. Blogs and other such Internet related activities must be actively made use of.

“Motivating faculty to learn new teaching methods is difficult regardless of technology”. (Rebaza, 1998)

Unfortunately, again practical considerations like competition in the private sector, professional jealousy and even the economic aspects of that particular school/college/institution, society or country make such interactions very difficult, unless the management or the higher authorities take an active interest.

According to the present researcher the task based, content based and participatory approaches should form the core of today's approach towards the English classroom along with the spiral of the traditional methods like drilling of grammatical activities, active situational dialogues etc. Students learn to communicate by actually communicating in the form of speaking and writing and not by being either passive or even active listeners.

The Crucial Role of EFLU and DCS:

These days a teacher needs a Continuing Professional Development (CPD). Faculty development programmes need a permanent establishment and teachers especially the newly recruited teachers need to go there and refresh their professional energies. District centers of EFLU are the main source of such initiatives. It is to be understood that teacher trainers from EFLU and other Faculty Development Programme Centers follow a top-down intervention where theory plays a major role. But the innovative practice they implement is that they give a platform for teacher learners and give them full autonomy thereby improving their confidence and reducing their anxiety resulting in increased level of proficiency and efficiency in the classroom. They share their experiences in a free manner resulting in cooperative and collaborative learning. When they are away from their daily routine and pressures of their professional activities they become learners again and in a way try to understand the practical problems, social, personal and psychological issues, which does not allow English teachers to concentrate more on their every day teaching activities and even research readings. Their participation in such faculty development programmes enables them to become better teachers, even when they can't understand fully some very scholarly lectures given by the professors from EFLU and other such faculty development institutions etc. They can experiment on their new ideas which for various reasons they cannot do in their schools / colleges. Their participation in such faculty improvement programmes also indirectly brings out their independent potential of leadership qualities which are absolutely necessary to put forward their

academic, infrastructural and other such professional requirements to the management and other such higher authorities. Therefore some of these teachers are in a better position to understand the everyday practical problems of other English teachers and bring them to the notice of the management. This is also called as a bottoms-up initiative especially in academic issues. What the resource persons do is called the top-down approach. Really enthusiastic English teachers can even form, or rather should form support groups and if possible the establishment of a special local / regional English language teachers association and even bring out a small college journal every month focusing mainly on English related activities.

Many colleges, universities, institutions conduct such programs but are not taken really seriously either by the management or even by the resource persons and by the senior teachers. Therefore junior teachers are in a bewildered position and some of them even think that all this is only for formality sake and some even gleefully accept the certificates given to add them to their resumes / CVs. In this way real learning does not take place. What should be done ideally is to divide them into some groups. These groups should be formed from different colleges so that new ideas can be imbibed and silly ego clashes, jealousies and competitions can be avoided. Unfortunately in many such programs this crucial practical issue is not taken seriously. In many other such programs 80-100 teachers participate and they are treated like learners and after the lecture a question cum answer session follows with the resource person. The

presence of so many teachers will not solve the real practical problems but will at least resolve some practical problems of the individual teacher learners due to the interaction with the resource person but only in a partial manner as even many teachers are reluctant to ask questions / clarifications in front of a large group. The resource person does not have much time to give special preference to each individual.

In such circumstances internet and other latest technologies are playing a major role and helping to some extent but the personal interactive way of learning is far superior to any other way even in this age of globalization and internet. Junior teachers should be actively encouraged to even write at least a small article based on their experiences in the college or their reading in a personal manner in their college magazines, even e-magazines or small brochures only for English at least a month. The main point is that in the busy schedule of a teacher he / she does not have much time to interact in the college on these issues due to various reasons like management rules. Some managements feel as gossiping when the teachers were interacting with their fellow teachers. Even gender sensitive issues, junior / senior complexities and finally the cruel gladiatorial like competition for public recognition from management, increments, incentives, leaves for attending seminars etc. So an already published small journal devoted to English related issues only, at least once a month or even a semester will go a long way in cooperative and collaborative learning as well as professional faculty development and satisfaction. Many managements are under the wrong notion that this type of

programs will automatically develop both teacher and learner and get good examination results. Most of them are from technical backgrounds and still rooted in the traditional notion that English is secondary and core engineering and other such scientific subjects are primary. But in the age of Internet, globalization and struggle for placements, jobs in good companies, English is equally important to get good jobs in good corporations and better packages. Only some elite colleges recognize and promote such faculty development programs seriously with liberal funding, good infrastructure and bringing as resource persons highly qualified and motivated senior professors who are experts in this field.

The Usefulness of District Centre Scheme:

The District Centre Scheme by EFLU is a real asset for such Faculty Development Programmes. There is recognition and evolution of sorts among English teachers in towns and villages regarding such English skills improvement programmes. Some teaching communities have even started blogs and sharing their experiences. Of course almost all the major communities are inviting experts from EFLU and other such faculty development institutions to understand the latest theoretical and technological trends related to the teaching-learning process. The materials are centrally developed and a clear lesson plan is given by EFLU District Centre Scheme and so is very useful for the average teacher from a town or a village. However this kind of approach is not getting desired results.

For every small teaching community a teacher mentor or a kind of a teacher group

leader is appointed to guide them. There are many District Level Advisory committees and regular meetings and seminars. Still all such things are not getting the real desired results or only a tiny percentage of teachers are benefitting. So where is the lacuna? Does it lie on the part of the system or on the part of the teachers? Private teachers are taking more interest and so the improvement rate among them is slightly higher.

Objectives of Faculty Development Programmes:

All Faculty Development Programmes according to this researcher should have two main objectives. One is to obtain a perspective of such Faculty Development Programmes on the teachers, secondly, Continuous Professional Development and the other. Arguably speaking the most important one these days, is to gain an insight into the process by which these orientation programs stimulate initiatives to an insight into the process by which such Faculty Development Programmes and orientation programmes (not seminars / conferences) stimulate initiatives among the teachers for their own development. Questionnaires and personal interviews before and after such programmes are the best way to understand the effectiveness of such teacher development programmes.

Maya Pandit in her article *“From Top-down Intervention to Bottom-up Initiative: Teacher Development in Nellore (2012)”* narrates such views incisively. It seems most teachers admitted that they are weak in English and even have an “acute English phobia and inferiority complex.” This is really shocking. How can English teachers have inferiority complex and phobia towards their own profession?

This is because in India English has become such a status symbol and important for various reasons that anybody with an M.A degree or even a B.A. degree with even average marks can become a teacher. For them teaching means teaching grammar and making students understand lessons in regional medium apart from asking them to learn by-heart such lessons in English. So there is no real natural, efficient English language learning. Making them pass the exams using guides is also part of their duty.

Most students are silent in the classroom and do whatever the teacher says. Good results is the ultimate goal for teachers, students, administrators and parents. Therefore, real natural, professional teaching-learning process never really takes place in such situations. So there is a real need these days especially with the easy accessibility of Internet to modify the teaching approach using latest materials. Many teachers also felt that English Language Teachers' Association of India is an another excellent source for at least sharing their experiences with senior professors and the regular three monthly journals are a good source of some kind of different experiences on practical issues in English Language Teaching. Ideally a good and really effective English teaching-learning process should start from the elementary level itself. But the administrators have a different view. Many of them feel that English is really important only from high school level especially from 8th, 9th and 10th levels and teachers should be mainly trained especially for such levels with special preference to exams and results.

Now what are the alternatives to these practical problems? Rama Mathew in her

article "*Diary writing as a Tool for Reflective Practice*" suggests a reflective approach and tries to find out the real causes of the slow teaching –learning process. It should be remembered that students have to sit for 7 classes per day continuously with only a lunch break. According to many educational psychologists the attention span of an adult even for a new topic is only around 20 minutes. So, one can understand the plight of the students. Most of the activities in the classroom must be task based, cooperative and collaborative which should necessarily includes communicative language teaching and other such interesting and motivating activities.

Conclusions and Implications:

It is by now clear that a really, serious regular and practical Faculty Development Programmes are absolutely necessary with a special emphasis not only on expert resource persons, topic and content but also feedback before and after then the implementation of the feedback remarks. It is also quite clear that in a majority of cases the perceptions of administrators and teachers are quite different especially in areas like providing financial assistance, granting leaves for attending seminars etc.

Still such Faculty Development Programmes generated a new excitement among all English teachers, senior, junior, urban, city, rural etc., and therefore brought them out of their isolation and made them feel part of a community with common problems and experiences. Therefore this study strongly recommends that if teachers are given proper encouragement and confidence especially in the form of infrastructure, resources and

mentors in the form of senior professors from EFLU etc., and some extra time and platform to come together and share their experiences regularly, honestly, confidently and optimistically then they can begin to take control of their own professional development and thereby benefitting students as well as their schools and colleges.

Finally the study also strongly recommends and highlights a regular interaction and a meaningful dialogue

between management, teachers, parents, experts from EFLU etc. Other stakeholders like material and content providers, publishers as well as producers of English and communication skills technological software should also be involved in the entire process. This kind of approach if continued for a long term will establish an effective foundation not only for such Faculty Development Programmes but also for the entire teaching-learning process.

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